

## **Proposed Guidance on Overnight Travel**

### **Subsistence allowance – overnight travel**

(a) One-day trips that do not involve overnight lodging shall not be eligible for subsistence reimbursement, except for meals expressly authorized by and in accordance with the provisions of N.J.A.C. 6A:XX-6.7.

(b) Generally, overnight travel shall not be eligible for subsistence reimbursement if travel is within the State. The Commissioner shall be authorized, however, to grant waivers for overnight travel for school board members and school district employees to attend in-state conferences as follows:

1. Sponsors of conferences may submit to the Commissioner a request for a waiver of this prohibition by providing information regarding the conference as follows:

- i. Name and dates of event;
- ii. Where the conference requires more than one night's lodging, a justification for the length of the conference and the necessity to hold events for each day beyond the second day of the conference.
- iii. A description of the target audience by position title and/or educational certificate and endorsement;
- iv. Justification of the importance of the target audience attending the event;
- v. Cost of registration;

vi. Detailed list and description of any activities to be charged to the participants by the sponsor separate from the registration fee such as luncheons, work shops, entertainment, etc. including:

(1) The cost of the activity;

(2) whether participation is mandatory or voluntary; and

(3) the purpose such as social, guest speaker, working session, etc.

vii. Copy of agenda or program for the event.

viii. A brief report that includes the primary purpose of the event and the key issues that will be addressed at the event and their relevance to improving instruction or the operation of a school or school district.

ix. For training events, whether the training is needed for a certification required for continued employment, continuing education requirements, or requirements of federal or state law.

x. In the case of annual events, total attendance and registration cost for previous year.

2. The Commissioner may approve a request for waiver based on the strength of the application submitted considering relevance to improving instruction, school district operations or governance; relevance to the target audience; overall cost and other factors.

(c) Overnight travel within the State shall not be eligible for subsistence reimbursement if travel is on the day prior to the start of the conference. Reimbursement shall be prohibited for lodging prior to check-in time for the first day of the event or after check-out time on the last day of the event.

(d) The US General Services Administration publishes a schedule of federal per diem rates in the Federal Register for approved overnight travel by the event location. The latest federal per diem rates schedule for lodging, and meals and incidental expenses by location can be found at [www.gsa.gov](http://www.gsa.gov). The following restrictions apply to allowable per diem reimbursements:

1. Allowable per diem reimbursement for lodging, meals and incidentals shall be actual reasonable costs, not to exceed the federal per diem rates for the event location. Registration and conference fees are not subject to the federal per diem rate caps. If the event location is not listed, the maximum per diem allowance shall be \$31 for meal/incidental expenses and \$60 for lodging.

2. Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:11-12(o), reimbursement for lodging expenses for overnight travel, out-of-state or in-state as authorized by the Commissioner, may exceed the federal per diem rates if the hotel is the site of the convention, conference, seminar or meeting and the going rate of the hotel is in excess of federal per diem rates.

- i. If the hotel at the site of the current travel event is not available, lodging may be paid for similar accommodations at a rate not to exceed the hotel rate at the site of the current event.

ii. If there is no hotel at the site of the current travel event (e.g. Atlantic City Convention Center), then reimbursement for lodging shall not exceed the federal per diem rate.

3. If the meal is not part of a one-sum fee for a travel event, reimbursement may be approved for the full cost of an official convention meal that the employee attends, when such meal is scheduled as an integral part of the convention or conference proceedings. Receipts shall be submitted in order to obtain reimbursement in such situations.

4. The allowance for a meal or meals, or incidentals shall not be eligible for reimbursement when included and paid in the registration fee, the cost of lodging or transportation charge.

5. Receipts shall be required for all hotel and incidental expenses. Meal expenses under the federal per diem allowance limits do not require receipts pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:11-12 o(3).

6. In any cases in which the total per diem reimbursement is greater than the federal per diem rates, the costs shall be considered excessive in the absence of substantial justification accompanying the travel voucher submitted by the employee or board member. In such cases receipts shall be submitted for all costs including meals.

7. Employees and board members shall patronize hotels and motels that offer special rates to government employees unless alternative lodging offers greater cost benefits or is more advantageous to the conduct of school district business. These hotels and motels can be found at <http://www.fedrooms.com> under the State Employees option.

8. Subsistence expenses for an employee or board member shall not be allowed at the school district or within a radius of ten miles from the school district, except for meals expressly authorized by and in accordance with the provisions of N.J.A.C. 6A:XX-6.7. Non-allowed expenses include, but are not limited to, meals and refreshments for staff meetings and in-service days.

9. Actual subsistence expenses shall not be reimbursable if paid by the traveler to a member of his family, to another school district employee or to a member of the family of another school district employee.